

Libby 04/1

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Kootenai Valley Record

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Libby moving ahead with park project

By Brent Shrum

Kootenai Valley Record

Libby City Council voted last Tuesday to negotiate with WGM Group of Missoula for engineering services for planned improvements to Riverfront Park.

WGM was one of seven firms that submitted proposals to the city and one of three, along with RPA and Carver Engineering of Kalispell, that were interviewed by the council the previous week. The consensus among council members was that WGM seemed best for the job although the other two firms interviewed were also well-qualified.

"I think all three of them are excellent and we couldn't go wrong," said Councilwoman Vicky

Lawrence.

Plans call for a new approach from Highway 37, slightly closer to town than the existing approach. The road would then take a turn toward the railroad tracks before curving back around the west side of the park. The result would be a major expansion of park space between the road and the Kootenai River.

Initial plans for the park project were drawn up by a landscape architect in 2009 based on various proposals that had been suggested. Following input from the community and the city council, several changes have been made to the design.

The updated design leaves the David Thompson Search & Rescue barn in its current location rather

than relocating it, which was deemed too difficult and prohibitively expensive.

Other changes to the original design include moving parking for the Fred Brown Pavilion closer to the structure for better access, adding more parking along the side of the road, and adding a children's play area.

Carried over from the original plan are a band gazebo, improved boat launching facilities, and a retail shop area next to the rail spur.

In other business, the council:

- Voted to eliminate

a fire suppression fee on water bills for commercial structures. The council expects the lost revenue, estimated at around \$13,000, to be made up by fees paid by contractors for use of a dry hydrant at Riverfront Park.

- Approved an ordinance allowing use of fireworks for New Year's celebrations. Fireworks will be legal every year from 5 p.m. on Dec. 31 until 1 a.m. on Jan. 1.

- Voted to contribute \$2,500 to a project to erect a statue near Fireman's Park honoring Libby's volunteer firefighters.

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